DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 059 711 JC 720 064

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TITLE Community College Faculty: Some Basis for Their Attitudes Toward Academically Disadvantaged Students.
PUB DATE 71
NOTE 20p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Disadvantaged Youth; *Educationally Disadvantaged; *Junior Colleges; *Low Ability Students; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS Illinois

ABSTRACT

A study conducted in the fall of 1971 assessed the attitudes community college faculty held toward academically disadvantaged students and identified certain factors relating to those attitudes. A semantic differential research instrument discriminating between faculty holding "more favorable" and "less favorable" attitudes was administered along with a background questionnaire to 700 full-time Illinois public community college faculty in eight randomly selected colleges. Data analysis was based upon the factor scores of evaluation, potency, and receptivity. Interpretation of the results led to the conclusion that the most appropriate faculty to teach these students are (1) females with lower-class precollege backgrounds, and those (2) having less than a Bachelor's degree, (3) agreeing with the role of the community college, (4) having less than one year of community college teaching experience, (5) considering their main function to teach general education, (6) wanting to participate in the study of disadvantaged students, and (7) willing to take in -service training for teaching disadvantaged students. (Author/AL)

ED 059711

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--Community College Faculty-- Some Basis for Their Attitudes Toward Academically Disadvantaged Students

1971

A study was conducted in the fall of 1971 which assessed the attitudes community college faculty held toward academically disadvantaged (A.D.) students and identified certain factors which related to these attitudes. It was felt that the attitude an instructor holds toward his students may influence the success they have in his class. This assumption appears to be supported by researchers such as Ryans and Combs, and professed by authors such as Roueche.

In a six-year study involving 100 separate research projects and over 6,000 teachers, Ryans (1960) concluded that one of the characteristics that differentiated good teachers from not so good teachers was that the good teachers held favorable attitudes toward students. Combs (1965) concluded that:

> What a teacher believes, . . . about the nature of his students will have a most important effect on how he behaves toward them. If a teacher believes his students have the capacity to learn, he will behave quite differently from the teacher who has serious doubts about the capacities of his charges. The teacher who believes his students can learn, begins his task with hope and assurance that both he and his students may be successful. He can place confidence and trust in his students and be certain that if he is successful in facilitating and encouraging the learning process, they can, they <u>will</u> learn (p. 21, italics in original).

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Roueche (1968) concurs that teacher attitudes may be "theoretically and empirically relevant to student success," but raises the question "How are these qualities to be developed? (p. 19)." He suggests that this may be accomplished through activities such as in-service workshops, preservice education, and discriminant selection for employment. This study was an attempt to determine if factors such as Roueche identified are related to the attitudes faculty hold toward A.D. students.

Procedure

A research instrument /the semantic differential, Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum (1957)/ was developed, in a pilot study, which discriminated between faculty holding "more favorable" and "less favorable" attitudes toward A.D. students. The validity of the instrument was established, by using administrator judgment which coincided with faculty member response to a situational item, to determine favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward A.D. students. Short-term reliability was established through a test-retest procedure and ranged from .67 to .92 on the individual scales selected. This instrument, together with a questionnaire gathering information on their background, was administered to 700 full-time Illinois public community college faculty in eight randomly selected colleges. Usable returns totaled 472 (67.5 percent).

Data analyses was based upon the factor scores of evaluation, potency and receptivity as defined by Osgood et al. (1957) in their "Thesaurus Sampling" study. As used in the present study, the evaluative factor consists of the combined scores of the intelligent-unintelligent and the optimistic-pessimistic scales. Intelligent and optimistic are associated with "more favorable" attitudes and unintelligent and pessimistic with "less favorable" attitudes. The potency factor consists of the combined scores of the serious-humorous and the strong-weak scales. Serious and strong are associated with "more favorable" attitudes and humorous and weak with "less favorable" attitudes. The receptivity factor consists of the combined scores of the sensitive-insensitive and the attentive-inattentive scales. Sensitive and attentive are associated with "more favorable" attitudes and insensitive and inattentive with "less favorable" attitudes. Mean score values above eight are associated with "more favorable" attitudes and values below eight with "less favorable" attitudes.

One of three decisions was reached regarding each variable. It was judged to be either: (1) a factor significantly related to differences in attitudes if the level of probability was .01 or less; (2) a factor possibly related to differences in attitudes if the level of probability was from .10 to .01 or (3) a factor not related to differences in attitudes toward A.D. students if the level of probability was greater than .10.

Conclusions

Table I presents the F-ratios of those variables which were judged to be significant factors and those judged to be possbile factors related to differences in attitudes toward A.D. students. When comparing the mean factor scores, the following conclusions were reached regarding these variables.

1. Female faculty members perceive A.D. students more favorably than male faculty members (Table II).
2. Faculty members from lower-class precollege socioeconomic backgrounds perceive A.D. students most favorably while faculty members from upper-class precollege socioeconomic backgrounds perceive them least favorably (Table III).
3. Faculty members who hold less than a Bachelor's Degree perceive A.D. students the most favorably while faculty members holding a Bachelor's Degree, and those holding more than a Master's Degree perceive them the least favorably (Table IV).
4. Faculty members with less than one year of community college teaching experience perceive A.D. students the most favorably. The more years of community college teaching experience the faculty members, have, the less favorably they perceive A.D. students (Table V).

5. Faculty members who have participted in a course or workshop which focused on the disadvantaged student perceive A.D. students more favorably than those who have not participated (Table VI).
6. Faculty members who agreed with the typical role and function of the community college appear to perceive A.D. students most favorably while those who disagreed appear to perceive them least favorably (Table VII).
7. Faculty members whose major teaching assignment is general education courses appear to perceive A.D. students most favorably while those whose major teaching assignment is transfer courses appear to perceive them least favorably (Table VIII).
8. Faculty members who have participated in in-service training concerning disadvantaged students appear to perceive A.D. students more favorably than those who have not participated (Table IX).

The F-ratios of those variables which were found not to be related to differences in attitudes among community college faculty toward A.D. students are presented in Table X.

The conclusion reached is that the following factors do not relate to significant differences in attitudes held by community college faculty toward A.D. students:

1. The age of the faculty member.
2. Whether or not the faculty member was personally well prepared for college work when enrolling as an undergraduate.
3. The field in which faculty members earned their most recent degree; i.e., Arts and/or Humanities; Business Professional: Law, Engineering . . . ; etc.
4. Whether or not the faculty member was currently teaching courses for academically disadvantaged students.
5. The faculty member's minor teaching assignment; i.e., major assignment is courses for transfer students, minor assignment is courses for general education students.
6. Whether or not the faculty member has taken a course in which a study of the junior college was the primary focus.
7. Whether or not the faculty member has had previous experience teaching in an elementary school, a high school, a four-year college or University or teaching academically disadvantaged students.
8. Whether or not the faculty member has had previous occupational experience other than teaching either related or not related to his or her teaching field.

Implications

Gleazer (1971) reports that "Readiness programs with the back-up of reading and writing laboratories now involve 25 to 50 percent of the entering community college students with mixed results (p. 7)." As the community college continues to grow the evidence, (Fenske, 1969; Medsker & Tillery, 1971), indicate that it will attract even larger numbers of students in need of remedial instruction. Can it continue to meet the needs of this student with mixed results? The answer is, of course, no! The community college must either become successful in meeting the needs of academically disadvantaged students, or accept the fact that it can not meet their needs and discontinue the practice which gained the open door admission policy the reputation of being a "revolving door."

Considerable effort has gone into curriculum projects for the purpose of developing an instructional program in which A.D. students can remedy their differences and qualify for regular college work. Although these efforts are to be lauded, the conclusions drawn from this study suggest still another aspect of the teaching-learning milieu needs to be considered. Specifically, community college Presidents, Deans and Department Chairmen should consider how the faculty members they employ and assign to teach A.D. students, perceive their students.

In recruiting and assigning faculty to teach A.D. students, it would seem appropriate, based on the results of this study, to search for females who: (1) come from lower-class precollege socioeconomic backgrounds; (2) hold less than a Bachelor's degree; (3) generally agree, but do not strongly agree with the typical role and function of the community college; (4) have less than one year of community college teaching experience; (5) consider their major teaching assignment to be courses for general education students; (6) have participated in a course or workshop which focused on a study of disadvantaged students and (7) are willing to participate in in-service training which focuses on problems in teaching disadvantaged students. Upon employing or identifying current employees, meeting as many of these criteria as possible, it is essentail that a sound in-service program be developed focusing on the problems confronted in teaching A.D. students. Of course, one of the major problems appears to be the faculty members' perception of these students.

Four-year colleges and Universities which offer programs to prepare community college faculty should--must give serious consideration to offering courses and workshops which focus on acquainting prospective teachers with the characteristics of A.D. students. Acquainting prospective teachers with the fact that the majority of the A.D. students are not successful is insufficient. The fact that the majority of the A.D. students have the potential to be successful, if only permitted to develop the self confidence

and feeling of worth and dignity that they have a right to, in fact that everyone in a democratic society has a right to, must be stressed. It is apparent from this study that the current Junior College Course, which is so prevalent, is not doing the job.

In conclusion, one must recognize the professional limitations a person with the "ideal" background for teaching A.D. students has and strongly recommend that community college teacher preparation programs be established which not only develop favorable perceptions of A.D. students within prospective teachers, but which also prepare them to be successful instructors.

TABLE I

F-Ratios -- Variables Related to Differences in Attitudes Toward A.D. Students

Variables (Faculty)	Factors		
	Evaluative	Potency	Receptivity
Sex	10.96[e]	3.12[a]	7.65[d]
Precollege Socioeconomic Background	5.15[d]	4.76[d]	2.68[a]
Highest Degree Held	4.53[e]	1.84	1.46
C.C. Teaching Experience	1.15	4.93[e]	3.34[c]
Course/Workshop re: Disadvantaged	4.23[b]	1.35	8.28[e]
Agreement with C.C. Philosophy	2.93[c]	0.79	0.69
Major Teaching Assignment	4.61[c]	0.66	1.04
In-Service Training re: Disadvantaged	1.15	2.91[a]	3.86[b]

[a] $p < .10$
[b] $p < .05$
[c] $p < .025$
[d] $p < .01$
[e] $p < .005$
[f] $p < .001$

TABLE II

Sex

Factor	Male		Female	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Evaluative	6.99	283	7.79	139
Potency	6.90	283	7.32	140
Receptivity	8.21	283	8.94	140

TABLE III

Precollege Socioeconomic Background

Factor	Lower-Class		Middle-Class		Upper-Class	
	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N
Evaluative	7.55	55	7.24	362	5.79	19
Potency	7.36	55	7.01	363	5.74	19
Receptivity	8.85	55	8.41	363	7.47	19

TABLE IV

Highest Degree Held

Degree	Evaluative Factor	
	Mean	N
Less than a Bachelor's	8.63	21
Bachelor's	7.10	39
Master's	7.26	317
More than a Master's	7.11	32

TABLE V

Community College Teaching Experience

Years	Potency Factor		Receptivity Factor	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Less than 1-	7.73	46	9.20	46
1- to 4-	7.15	196	8.54	195
4- to 7-	6.79	118	8.29	119
7- or more	6.59	76	8.15	76

TABLE VI

Participation in Course or Workshop

For the Disadvantaged

Participated	Evaluative Factor		Receptivity Factor	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Yes	7.72	127	9.00	127
No	7.17	295	8.17	296

TABLE VII

Agreement with Community College Philosophy

	Evaluative Factor	
Extent of Agreement	Mean	N
Strongly Agree	7.20	233
Agree	7.39	176
Neutral	6.91	11
Disagree	5.38	13
Strongly Disagree	6.75	4

TABLE VIII

Major Teaching Assignment

	Evaluative Factor	
Assignment	Mean	N
Transfer Courses	7.10	231
Occupational Courses	7.22	144
General Education Courses	8.02	47

TABLE IX

In-Service Training

Concerning the Disadvantaged

Participated	Potency Factor		Receptivity Factor	
	Mean	N	Mean	N
Yes	7.32	93	8.84	92
No	6.89	343	8.28	344

TABLE X

F-Ratios--Variables Not Related
To Differences in Attitudes Toward A.D. Students (p.>10)

Variables	Factors		
	Evaluative	Potency	Receptivity
Age	1.75	0.73	0.21
Precollege Academic Readiness	0.81	0.77	0.24
Field of Most Recent Degree	0.79	0.81	1.42
Currently Teaching A.D. Course	0.34	0.001	0.45
Minor Teaching Assignment	0.09	1.67	1.93
Taken J.C. Course	0.005	0.87	0.04
Teaching Exp.--Elementary	0.85	0.93	0.79
Secondary	0.39	1.26	0.52
4-Year College/U.	0.97	1.03	0.40
A.D. Students	0.99	0.11	1.20
Occupational Experience-Related	1.01	0.63	1.62
Nonrelated	1.74	0.16	0.57

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